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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1334th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

2 September 2021

In connection with the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances

Madam Chairperson,

The problem of enforced disappearances retains its relevance for the entire OSCE area.

The authorities in the United States of America continue to carry out abductions, with impunity, of people in third countries without informing the relevant countries of citizenship, and hinder the relatives of illegally detained Russian citizens and the representatives of Russian diplomatic missions from gaining access to them. More than 50 such cases have occurred since 2008.

Another outrageous example of human rights violations is Guantánamo prison, where dozens of people are still being held without charge or trial. Prisoners are not provided with proper medical treatment or aftercare, even after having been subjected to torture. Those responsible for enforced disappearances and inhumane treatment that occurred while the detainees were being transferred or held in secret detention go unpunished.

In January this year, the special procedures experts of the United Nations Human Rights Council described Guantánamo as “a place of arbitrariness and abuse, a site where torture and ill-treatment were rampant and remain institutionalised, where the rule of law is effectively suspended, and where justice is denied”. The same international experts called the existence of this prison “a disgrace for the United States” and appealed to the US authorities to promptly close it and transfer the cases of the prisoners held there to civilian courts.

It cannot be ruled out that, just as the US authorities simply carry off to US territory illegally anyone around the world whom they suspect of anything, similar methods will be used to punish athletes who test positive for doping and whom the US authorities consider a threat to their country’s interests in international competitions.

In line with the findings of Canada’s National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, First Nations women have been subjected to centuries of systematic discrimination. According to the Native Women’s Association of Canada, a non-governmental organization (NGO), some 4,000 aboriginal women have disappeared or been murdered.

Special attention needs to be given to residential schools, where the destruction of indigenous cultural identity occurred and ill-treatment, including the physical abuse of children, was common practice. The consequences of that egregious policy continue to surface to this day. The discovery of mass graves on the grounds of former “educational institutions” between May and June of this year alone has resulted in the nameless remains of more than 1,300 children coming to light. We spoke about this in detail at the Permanent Council in July.

Enforced disappearances occur in the European Union too. The large-scale migration flows caused by the destabilization of the situation in the Middle East and North Africa by Western countries place migrant children in a particularly vulnerable position. Some of them go missing upon arrival in Europe, as confirmed by reports of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, and also of international NGOs. Minors are in effect becoming victims of the collective West’s destructive policy of interfering in the internal affairs of sovereign States.

Furthermore, we have repeatedly drawn attention to the existence of secret CIA prisons on Lithuanian and Romanian territory. The prisoners at these facilities have been subjected to ill-treatment and arbitrary detention. This has been confirmed by the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights on the cases of *Abu Zubaydah v. Lithuania* and *Al Nashiri v. Romania*.

Secret prisons where people are subjected to torture also exist in Ukraine. In 2019, the Head of the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU), Fiona Frazer, confirmed that in those parts of Donbas controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces the practice of arbitrary and incommunicado detention had been “customary” in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016. However, cases had also been recorded in both 2017 and 2018. The HRMMU has succeeded in establishing the names of 184 persons who were unlawfully detained in a secret prison of the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) in Kharkiv. In 2016, the then Prosecutor General of Ukraine, Yuriy Lutsenko, contrived to show one such formally non-existent SBU detention facility in Kyiv to journalists. As reported by the Ukrainian media themselves and international human rights organizations, such facilities were hastily set up in a number of cities in the Donbas region as well – some of them by members of nationalist battalions fighting alongside the Ukrainian armed forces. It is evident that the founders of these “detention points” drew their inspiration at the time from such “models” as Guantánamo and the CIA’s secret prisons in the European Union, where people were detained beyond the bounds of international humanitarian law and human rights. Many manifestations of unwarranted cruelty have never been given due legal evaluation. No one has been punished.

We call on the States mentioned to diligently fulfil their human rights obligations, notably by bringing the perpetrators to justice. What is required here, as in other areas, is an exchange of best practices in eradicating this evil, rather than lecturing on the part of those who create it.

Thank you for your attention.